

# CALIFORNIA OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

## LICENSED VOCATIONAL NURSES

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### WHAT DOES A LICENSED VOCATIONAL NURSE DO?

LICENSED VOCATIONAL NURSES (LVN) are important members of a health team. They help plan, implement, and evaluate nursing care. They work in hospitals, long-term care, home health, physicians' offices, clinics, ambulatory surgical centers, and emergency medical centers providing basic bedside care for patients who are injured, sick, or recovering.

Under the supervision of doctors and registered nurses, LVNs must report changes in patient's condition. Tasks can vary greatly, depending on where they work. They may perform basic patient assessment, administer prescribed medicines, give injections, and start intravenous fluids. Some LVNs help deliver, care for, and feed newborns. Experienced LVNs may supervise certified nursing assistants and aides.

After specialized training, LVNs may work in psychiatry, surgery, intensive care, or coronary care.

Licensed Vocational Nurses perform the following tasks:

- Administer specified medication, orally or by subcutaneous or intramuscular injection, and note time and amount on patients' charts.
- Take and chart blood pressure, pulse, respirations, and temperature.
- Dress wounds, give enemas, douches, alcohol rubs, and massages.
- Apply compresses, ice bags, and hot water bottles.
- Perform basic patient assessment and report unfavorable reactions to medication or treatment to nurse or doctor.
- Bathe, dress, and assist patients to walk and turn.
- Assemble and use such equipment as catheters, tracheotomy tubes, and oxygen suppliers.
- Collect samples, such as urine, blood, and sputum, from patients for testing and perform routine laboratory tests.
- Sterilize equipment and supplies, using germicides, sterilizer, or autoclave.

Licensed Vocational Nurses in nursing homes provide routine bedside care, do basic patient assessment, help evaluate patient needs, help develop care plans, and supervise the care provided by certified nursing aides. In doctors' offices and clinics, they also may make appointments, keep records, and perform other clerical duties. LVNs that work in patient homes may cook for their patients, keep rooms orderly, see that patients are comfortable and in good spirits, and teach other family members simple nursing tasks.

In other states Licensed Vocational Nurses are called Licensed Practical Nurses.

## WHAT SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT?

Important skills, knowledge, and abilities for LVNs include:

- **Active Listening** – Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- **Service Orientation** – Actively looking for ways to help people.
- **Reading Comprehension** – Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work-related documents.
- **Speaking** – Talking to others to convey information effectively.
- **Monitoring** – Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
- **Critical Thinking** – Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
- **Judgment and Decision Making** – Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.
- **Medicine and Dentistry** – Knowledge of symptoms, treatment and treatment alternatives, drug properties and interactions, and preventive health-care measures that relate to medicine and dentistry.
- **Customer and Personal Service** – Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.
- **Psychology** – Knowledge of human behavior and performance; individual differences in ability, personality, and interests; and learning and motivation.
- **Problem Sensitivity** – The ability to tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.

## WHAT'S THE WORK ENVIRONMENT?

Licensed Vocational Nurses work in hospitals, long-term care, private homes, physicians' offices, clinics, ambulatory surgical centers, and emergency medical centers, often around technical medical equipment.

Nursing involves prolonged standing, a lot of walking, some lifting, bending, stooping, and reaching. Licensed Vocational Nurses can face hazards from caustic chemicals, radiation, and infectious diseases such as hepatitis. They are subject to back injuries when moving patients. They often must deal with heavy workloads. In addition, the patients they care for may be confused, agitated, or uncooperative.

### ***Union Membership***

Licensed Vocational Nurses can join the California Licensed Nurses Association (CLVNA), a labor union and professional association. They can also join the Health Care Workers division of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

## WHAT'S THE CALIFORNIA JOB OUTLOOK?

The following information is from the occupational projections produced by the Employment Development Department (EDD) Labor Market Information Division (LMID):

### Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses

Estimated number of workers in 2002:	52,900
Estimated number of workers in 2012:	65,500
Projected Growth 2002-2012:	23.8%
Est. openings due to separations by 2012:	11,500

*These figures do not include self-employment.*

This occupation will grow faster than average compared with all occupations in California. Total job opportunities between the years 2002 and 2012 will be 27,100 – or just over 2,410 jobs annually.

### ***Trends***

Expected growth in employment of LVNs through 2012 is in response to the long-term care needs of a rapidly growing elderly population and the general growth of healthcare. Replacement needs will be a major source of job openings as workers leave the occupation permanently. Nursing homes will offer the most new jobs for LVNs as the number of aged and disabled people in need of long-term care rises.

Increasingly, LVNs will find jobs outside the traditional hospital setting as healthcare delivery changes. Due largely to advances in technology, sophisticated procedures once performed only in hospitals are being done in physicians' offices and clinics, ambulatory surgical centers, and emergency medical centers. As a result, employment of LVNs is expected to grow much faster than average in those settings.

### **WHAT DOES THE JOB PAY?**

#### ***California Earnings***

The following information is from the Occupational Employment Statistics Survey of Employers by EDD/LMID:

#### Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses 2005 Wages

Hourly wages range from	\$17.30	to	\$22.54
Average hourly wage	\$20.14		
Average annual wage	\$41,898		

*These figures do not include self-employment.*

#### ***Hours***

Most hospital and nursing home LVNs work a 40-hour week, but because patients need around-the-clock care, some work nights, weekends, and holidays. Some hospitals have 16-hour (double) shifts; overtime wages may be paid after the first eight hours.

#### ***Benefits***

Benefits usually include vacation, sick leave, medical and dental insurance, and retirement plans.

### **HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE JOB?**

The first step is to decide if this is the kind of work you want to do. Job satisfaction and willingness to stay on the job usually comes from doing work that holds your interest. People who like LVN work usually have a social interest. This means they truly like to help others, talk to them, teach them how to do things, and provide services.

Dependability, good judgment, adaptability, and emotional stability, are important for success. Licensed Vocational Nurses must also be able to follow detailed instructions.

#### ***Education and Training***

Licensed Vocational Nurses must successfully complete a California accredited training program lasting approximately two years, pass an exam, and be licensed by the Board of Vocational Nursing and Psychiatric Technicians, Department of Consumer Affairs. Just over 100 schools are currently accredited to provide LVN training throughout the State. Contact the Board at (916) 263-7800 or [www.bvnpt.ca.gov](http://www.bvnpt.ca.gov) for a list of these schools or other information.

#### ***Licensing and Certification***

Requirements to become an LVN are:

- Be at least 17 years of age.
- High school graduation or passing score on the General Education Development (GED).
- Graduate of a California accredited school of vocational nursing.
- Pass the National Council Licensing Examination for Practical (Vocational) Nurses (NCLEX-PN) written examination.
- Apply for Vocational Nursing License and pay fees to the California Board of Vocational Nursing and Psychiatric Technicians.
- Successful clearance of a finger print background check by the California Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

### Continuing Education

Licensed Vocational Nurses are required to renew their license every two years. They must complete 30 units of continuing education within that two-year period as prescribed by the board.

### HOW DO I FIND THE JOB?

Licensed Vocational Nurses can register with their school placement center for job leads. The California Licensed Vocational Nurses' Association posts job opportunities on its Web site, [www.clvna.org](http://www.clvna.org).

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Most LVNs are employed in two industries: Nursing and Personal Care Facilities and Offices and Clinics of Medical Doctors.

Search these **yellow page** headings for listings of private firms:

- Hospitals
- Nurses and Nurses Registries
- Nursing Homes
- Clinics
- Physicians and Surgeons, M.D

Most of these headings can also be found in the Internet section of the yellow pages for an online search.

The following Internet resources can be helpful to the job search process:

America's Career InfoNet  
[www.acinet.org](http://www.acinet.org)

America's Job Bank  
[www.ajb.dni.us](http://www.ajb.dni.us)

CalJOBS<sup>SM</sup>  
[www.caljobs.ca.gov](http://www.caljobs.ca.gov)

Job Search and Resume Writing  
[www.worksmart.ca.gov/success\\_tips\\_menu.html](http://www.worksmart.ca.gov/success_tips_menu.html)

Local Job Service Offices  
[www.edd.ca.gov/jsrep/jsloc.htm](http://www.edd.ca.gov/jsrep/jsloc.htm)

Occupational Information Network (O\*NET) Online  
<http://online.onetcenter.org>

One-Stop Career Centers List  
[www.edd.ca.gov/ONE-STOP/pic.htm](http://www.edd.ca.gov/ONE-STOP/pic.htm)

For statewide and local projections, wages, employers by county, and other occupational information go to [labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov](http://labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov) and select *Find an Occupation Profile*.

### WHERE CAN THE JOB LEAD?

Experienced LVNs can be promoted to supervisory or administrative positions or take additional training for clinical specialties. With additional education and passing the licensure examination, they can become registered nurses, nurse practitioners, or physician assistants. A few go on to medical school to become physicians.

### OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

California State Board of Vocational  
Nursing and Psychiatric Technicians  
2535 Capitol Oaks Drive, Suite 205  
Sacramento, CA 95833  
(916) 263-7800  
[www.bvnpt.ca.gov](http://www.bvnpt.ca.gov)

California Licensed Vocational  
Nurses Association  
P.O. Box 700  
West Sacramento, CA 95691  
(800) 411-6901  
[www.clvna.org](http://www.clvna.org)

### RELATED OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners	No. 29
Psychiatric Technicians	No. 95
Physical Therapists	No. 117
Nurse Aides and Orderlies	No. 442
Physical Therapy Aides and Assistants	No. 451
Respiratory Therapists	No. 454
Physician Assistants	No. 508
Radiation Therapists	No. 535

## OCCUPATIONAL CODE REFERENCES

**SOC** (*Standard Occupational Classification*)  
Licensed Practical and Licensed  
Vocational Nurses 29-2061

**O\*NET** (*Occupational Information Network*)  
Licensed Practical and Licensed  
Vocational Nurses 29-2061.00

**OES** (*Occupational Employment Statistics*)  
Licensed Practical Nurses 32505